SARON MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

Saron Evangelical Lutheran Church (ELCA)
510 Main Street
St. Joseph, MI 49085

Website: www.saronlutheran.org
Email: info@saronlutheran.org
Phone: 269-983-1273
Facebook:www.facebook.com/saronlutheranchurchst.joseph

Saron's Mission: ***Joyfully sharing God's love for all!!!***

Reverend James E. Smith, Pastor
Cell: 269-816-3870
Email: pastorjames@saronlutheran.org

Amanda Bradley, Admin Assistant
Cell: 419-306-5780
Email: info@saronlutheran.org
bradley717@gmail.com

Marcus Roll, Music Director
Email: roll1mc@gmail.com

Irma Gorman, Organist
Email: pianoladyijg@yahoo.com

Beth Gray-Roll, Organist
Email: egrayroll@gmail.com

Ken Boyd, Bookkeeper
Email: financial@saronlutheran.org

Sara Porter, Childcare Specialist
Email: portersara20@gmail.com

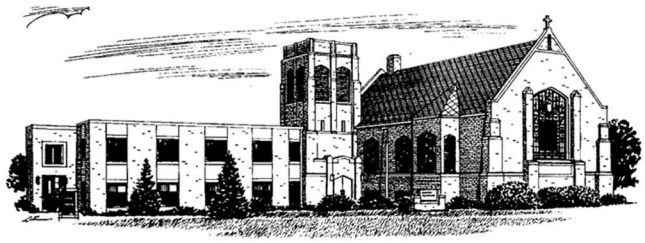
Typical Sunday at Saron:

Summer Schedule (**began May 25, 2025**):
10am Worship
On-Location and via Zoom
Nursery Available
No Learning Hour

Fall, Winter and Spring **(begins Sept 7, 2025):**
8:30am Worship On-Location
9:40am Learning Hour for Ages 3-Adult
11am Worship with Zoom Option
Nursery Available

We hold in prayer:
The Rev. Elizabeth Eaton,
Presiding Bishop, ELCA
The Rev. Dr. Craig Satterlee, Bishop of the
North/West Lower Michigan Synod, ELCA
The Episcopal Diocese of the Great Lakes

Our Companion Synods:
Christian Lutheran Church of Honduras
Lutheran Church of Papua New Guinea
Lutheran Church of Latvia



Freed to Serve!

As the calendar flips to July, our second readings come from Paul's letter to the Galatians. Galatians was Martin Luther's favorite book of the Bible—so much so that he called it "*Meine Katie*" after his wife Katharina von Bora. Why? Because Galatians is all about *freedom*. So what might Paul tell us about freedom for July 4, 2025?

Paul writes to a congregation that he is worried is backsliding into legalism: "For freedom Christ has set us free. Stand firm, therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery (5:1)."

For freedom Christ has set us free! This verse not only aligns with our Lutheran heritage-freed by the Good News of Jesus-but it also affirms what we believe in America. Our independence and our freedoms were hard-won. Why would we ever want to backslide into serving another king or anybody else?

Paul could quit there, and everyone would go to their July 4th BBQ happy, but he doesn't. Later, he writes:

For you were called to freedom, brothers and sisters; only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for self-indulgence, but through love become slaves to one another. For the whole law is summed up in a single commandment, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." If, however, you bite and devour one another, take care that you are not consumed by one another (5:13-15).

We are freed to love. We are freed to serve. It's only when we are freed by the Good News of Jesus we truly can love or serve because it's the first time that we have a choice.

If, as Martin Luther King, Jr. said, "the church is the conscience of the state," we as Christians, and especially freedom-loving Lutherans, can light the way for our fellow Americans. We are called to use our freedom not for our own gain, but to love and serve others. By choosing to live this way, we can spark a spirit of neighborliness that has marked our country at its best moments.

As we enter this last year before our 250th anniversary as a country, let's take this reminder from Galatians as an opportunity to put the brakes on "biting and devouring" our fellow Americans and our neighbors of all backgrounds: in our conversations, in our media diet, in our use of social media. And instead ask, how can my freedom serve my neighbor?

Pr. James

General Information

OFFICE HOURS

Pastor James E. Smith
Monday – Thursday
Hours may vary. Appointments are great!
Amanda Bradley (Admin Assistant):
Mondays & Thursdays 10am-2pm
Ken Boyd (Bookkeeper):
Thursday Mornings and by Appointment
Helping Hands Office Volunteers:
Wednesdays 9:00am-11am (approx)

If you or your loved one is need of a visit or pastoral care, please contact Pastor James at 269-816-3870.

Specific questions or concerns may be directed to an appropriate council member or committee liaison:
President – Fran Bolson
Vice President – Erik Bergh
Secretary – Claudia Staude
Treasurer – Ed Brunner
Worship – Marilyn Frey
Learning – Fran Bolson or Scott Gaspari
Outreach – Jim Manore
Facilities – Steve Cook or Ed Brunner
Youth – Chuck Knebl
Support – Jim Manore or Ed Brunner
Hospitality – Merrily Smith or Claudia Staude

Caring and Sharing

Happy Birthday Wishes to Saron's Members!

7/2 Elijah Nicholas
7/2 Kathy Bergh
7/3 Harper Brown
7/3 Ellie Hammer
7/4 Andrew Huff
7/7 Preston Akers
7/8 Elliot de la Foret
7/9 Barb Stelter
7/11 Thomas Freemire
7/11 Emmett Gray-Roll
7/11 Thatcher Gray-Roll
7/12 Scott Gaspari
7/14 Kylie Hammer
7/17 Terry Anserello
7/18 Becky Bucha
7/23 Lauren Kauffman
7/23 Mattias Streufert-Wold
7/24 Ken Kohs
7/25 John Koehler
7/25 Richard Osgood
7/28 Jennifer Nicholas
7/28 Sheila Hartlerode
7/29 Ilo Coar

Happy Anniversary Wishes to Saron's Members!

7/3 Adam & Shavonn Bradley
7/7 Beth Gray-Roll & Marcus Roll
7/12 Judi & Rian Huff
7/14 Joe & Kate Ulrey
7/25 Linda & Brent Dipert
7/26 Kati & Nick Hooper

If there are any omissions from the birthday or anniversary list, or if a date is incorrect, please let us know so we can get it correct in the future!

CONDOLENCES

We pray for peace and comfort for the friends and family of

William L. Oleson

upon his death on June 21, 2025. Bill's service will be held at Saron on June 28, 2025 at 11am.

God is our refuge and strength.
- Psalm 46:1a

NEW MEMBERS

Big Saron welcome to **Ed Staude** (long story – ask him) and **Jamie & Chris Svab**! On June 8, Saron was blessed to have these three officially join our church family. We look forward to being part of their lives and faith journeys.

Worship

ASSISTED HEARING DEVICES

Our sound system in the sanctuary came with headphones to assist those having difficulty hearing the worship service. If you are interested, ask Marcus if you can try one out.

SENSORY BAGS

As part of extending an unconditional welcome to all, we have Sensory Bags available for use. These bags contain a variety of fidgets that can help someone feel more able to sit quietly and/or focus. We also have noise canceling headphones for those who are sound sensitive. These brightly colored bags can be found in the narthex.

PRAYER GROUP

You are invited to offer your concerns or thanksgivings via our attendance cards each Sunday. Requests can also be made online via a link in our Thursday email. You may include as much, or little, detail as you wish. Requests are then given to the Monday prayer group. **You are invited to be part of this Monday group at noon.** We follow a simple format of morning prayer and insert the petitions and prayers for Saron's ministry and the world. Most weeks we are done in 30 minutes.

ALTAR FLOWERS

Sponsor a week by using the link in the weekly email or by contacting the church office. Please note any occasion/thanksgiving to be recognized in the bulletin. **Flowers are now $40 per vase.** Checks are payable to Saron with "Flowers" as the memo. Take them home to enjoy then please **return the vase.**

Nursery

Nursery service is available during worship. In order to utilize the space most effectively, this option is primarily directed towards our youngest members and guests. For preschoolers that need more physical and/or emotional space, activities are available in the narthex, including clipboards with coloring pages and children's bulletins. **It's vital to embrace family units in all stages and as such, we gladly welcome wiggles and giggles in worship!**

The goal of the nursery is to provide a safe environment to facilitate a meaningful worship experience for families. We recognize that may not look the same for all and encourage sharing concerns and suggestions with Marilyn Lucy (269/759-3464). We can also use more volunteers!

NOTE: Sara Porter, our childcare staff member, put in her notice, effective June 29. We are sad to see her go but excited for her next chapter and wish her all the best. As the process of securing a new provider continues, we will double up on volunteers. Thank you to all those that have already stepped up with offers to help!

SUNDAY SCRIPTURE READINGS

As you prepare for worship, you are invited to read and reflect on the Scriptures for the day.

July 6: 4th Sunday after Pentecost
Isaiah 66:10-14
Psalm 66:1-9
Galatians 6:[1-6] 7-16
Luke 10:1-11, 16-20

July 13: 5th Sunday after Pentecost
Deuteronomy 30:9-14
Psalm 25:1-10
Colossians 1:1-14
Luke 10:25-37

July 20: 6th Sunday after Pentecost
Genesis 18:1-10
Psalm 15
Colossians 1:15-28
Luke 10:38-42

July 27: 7th Sunday after Pentecost
Genesis 18:20-32
Psalm 138
Colossians 2:6-15 [16-19]
Luke 11:1-13

YOUTH GROUP

Youth Group (middle school & high school age) typically meets once per month after the service for food, fun and fellowship.

Contact Scott at scottgaspari@outlook.com with any questions or to be added to the email list.

Learning

Saron is a congregation seeking to become more fluent in the first language of faith, the language of Scripture, in order that we might live into our calling as a people renewed, enlivened, empowered and sent by the Word.

We have many educational options to fit your needs and schedule. Always feel welcome to join us, at any time and for as many sessions as works for you.

SUNDAY LEARNING HOUR

We will meet again, beginning September 7, with opportunities for many ages and stages!

The Sunday Learning Hour (9:40am-10:30am) offers the following options:

- Preschool - Grade 5: Sunday School
- Grades 6-8: Confirmation Classes
- High School - Adult: Adult Forum

WEDNESDAY MORNING BIBLE STUDY

Are you looking to get more out of the Bible? Are you hankering for a sneak peek at Sunday's readings? Are you wondering what it could possibly mean to *inwardly digest* the Scriptures? Of course you are! Wednesday morning Bible study is here for you! Throughout the summer, we'll be meeting outside (weather-permitting) on Wednesday morning at 9:30am. We'll be using the "African" or "Lambeth" Bible study method of prayerfully reading through, meditating and discussing the Sunday readings with an emphasis on how each reading personally affects us in our lives of faith. Questions? Ask Pr. James, or simply swing on by and join us!

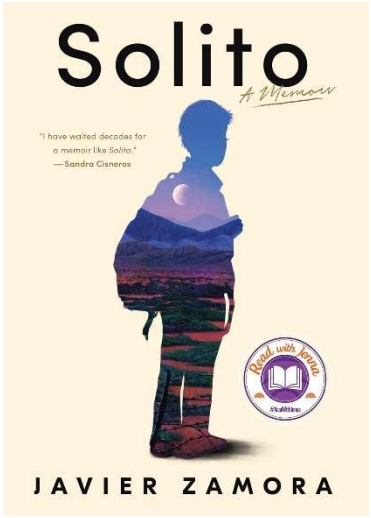
TUESDAY EVENING BIBLE STUDY

We have wrapped up our study of the book *Why? Looking at God, evil and personal suffering* by Sharon Dirckx (2021). Starting in July, we will focus on the lessons of the week.

We meet Tuesday evenings at 6pm in the upstairs lounge for one hour, then adjourn to a local restaurant for food and fellowship. **All are welcome!**

If you have any questions, feel free to call, text, or email:
Don Hafer (269/985-3637, haferdon@gmail.com)
Ed Staude (636/288-1016, staude.edmund@gmail.com)
Eric Standen (269/759-3556, dande-standen@sbcglobal.net)

BOOK CLUB



We are taking a break until August 3, when we will meet to discuss *Solito: A Memoir* by Javier Zamora. In the meantime, there are a few corrections to author names on the 2025-26 season (highlighted below). Thanks to Marilyn Lucy for catching these errors and for making the handy bookmarks with the schedule, available on the table under the bulletin board next to the elevators in the narthex. Hope everyone is enjoying a summer of good reading.

- Aug 3: *Solito: A Memoir* by Javier Zamora
- Sep 7: *James: A Novel* by Percival Everett
- Oct 5: *The Darwin Conspiracy* by John Darnton
- Nov 2: *Old Habits* by **Steve Higgs**
- Dec 7: *The Waiting: The True Story of a Lost Child* by Cathy LaGrow
- Feb 1: *Infectious Generosity; The Ultimate Idea Worth Spreading* by Chris Anderson
- Mar 1: *Who Moved the Stone* by Frank Morison
- Apr 12: *Frozen River* by **Ariel Lawhon**
- May 3: *The Collected Regrets of Clover* by Mikki Brammer

Questions? Call Kathy Cowall (269)428-0354 or kcowall@hotmail.com.

FORUM & fellowship

This group will break for the summer and meet again during the program year. Watch future newsletters for a schedule of topics. Let Ed know if you have any ideas of what we should cover!

Contact Ed Staude at 636/288-1016 with any questions.

Women of the ELCA

DEBORAH CIRCLE

Saron Church Women will meet for our annual summer dinner on **Wednesday, July 16 at 6pm at Papa Vino's in St. Joseph.** An email, including details has been sent. Please respond as soon as possible.

Contact Melanie at 269/449-8399 with any questions.

Hospitality

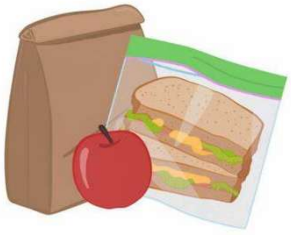
SUNDAY SNACKS

Who doesn't love a snack during a time of fellowship in the narthex? If you would like to be a Sunday snack host, sign up via the link in our weekly email or call/email the office so Amanda can sign you up. Please plan for at least 30 to partake. Thank you!

Outreach

THE BENTON HARBOR SOUP KITCHEN™ HEART-TO-HEART™

Simple food, honestly sourced and lovingly made creates connections, gives fuel to the fight, and starves ignorance and apathy.
-Benton Harbor Soup Kitchen



On May 22, Mary Alice Brunner, Dave Bradley, Jim Manore and Kathie Bradley assembled 110 sack lunches for the Benton Harbor Soup Kitchen. The lunches included a sandwich, chips, fruit, a pickle and cookies baked by Kathi Anserello and other Saron bakers. The Soup Kitchen has recently purchased and moved to the former Lark's BBQ on Main Street in Benton Harbor. During the renovation and until further notice, Saron will be assembling sack lunches at the Red Lotus Nutrition and delivering them to the Soup Kitchen to be distributed to the guests. We would like to thank Red Lotus for allowing us to pack the lunches in their commercial kitchen.

If you are able to help with assembling the lunches or to provide cookies, please use the link in the weekly email or contact Kathie Bradley at 269-921-4665.

Thank you to all who continue to support this ministry with your time, contributions, and prayers.
Joyfully sharing God's love for all!

NOISY OFFERING

ELCA WORLD HUNGER

We receive a noisy offering (or those not-so-noisy bills) on the first Sunday of each month. These gifts are sent to ELCA World Hunger.

Thank you for your continued support!

SYNOD CONTRIBUTIONS – WHERE DO THEY GO???

Our Northwest/Lower Michigan "Mitten" Synod is a 50% synod: that means half of the money parishes send is sent on to the wider church and other ministries. For July, we'll look closer at **ELCA World Hunger**, the recipient of our 1st Sunday of the Month Noisy Offering. In 2024, ELCA World Hunger celebrated fifty years with a bang! They raised over $20 million, with about half coming from individuals and around a third from synods and congregations.

Where does that money go? Well, lots of places! ELCA World Hunger is active in 40 states and 62 countries from Alabama to Zimbabwe and everywhere in-between. Domestically, about half goes to food security/production and water with the remainder going to housing (including LGBTQ+ youth homelessness), peace and justice advocacy, education, sustainable livelihoods, health, and community organizing. Internationally, ELCA World Hunger focuses on peace, justice, and human rights; food, agriculture, and livelihood; health; education and vocational training; relief and preparedness; and other program services.

In May, ELCA World Hunger presented Saron with a certificate as one of the ELCA's Most Generous Congregations. But if you missed helping in 2024, the good news is it's not too late to still wish them a happy birthday! You can donate online at elca.org/GiveWH, by calling 800-638-3522, or by making a check payable to ELCA World Hunger and sending it to ELCA, PO Box 1809, Merrifield, VA 22116-8009.

As always, thank you for your generosity to our congregation and to our synod!

Interfaith Action

Interfaith Action (swmichiganinterfaith.org) is a coalition of over 40 faith communities in Allegan, Berrien, Cass, St. Joseph, and Van Buren Counties. Some members of Saron attend meetings and work with various task force groups. One of the goals of Interfaith Action is to promote understanding and respect for diversity.

The first step in getting involved, is getting informed. Register to receive their communications at https://swmichinterfaith.org/contact1

EYE GLASS COLLECTION

Lions RECYCLE For Sight

Do you have old glasses sitting in a drawer? Lions Club has provided a collection box in the narthex. We have several members who are Lions that can deliver our glasses to the club where they will do more good. Thank you!

INCLUSIVITY TASK FORCE

The Inclusivity Task Force is committed to extending a welcome to all. Our congregation adopted the following welcome statement and is a **Reconciling in Christ** church.

As a community of faith who *joyfully shares God's love for all*, we believe our lives and faith are strengthened by diversity. We strive to be a community who welcomes people of every ability, age, citizenship status, ethnicity, gender identity and expression, language, marital status, political perspective, race, and sexual orientation. We are committed to the work of racial equity. Whatever life's circumstance, we openly welcome and value you. We celebrate God's unconditional love and respond joyfully to your presence here. All are welcome. You are welcome.

On June 28, Saron will have a table at the PrideFest taking place at the Shadowland Pavilion in St. Joseph. We say our mission is to "joyfully share God's love for all!" This is one of those opportunities where we can prove we mean it. For some, seeing a church at a PrideFest is the ultimate sign of the most basic acceptance. We look forward to sharing pictures in the next newsletter!

If you ever have any questions on our inclusivity journey, please feel free to call any one of the task force members:

Lindsay Gaspari: 847/373-8826 | lindsay.gaspari@yahoo.com
Meredith Gacek: 269/235-4530 | meredithgacek@yahoo.com

Support

The Support Committee typically meets the Tuesday before the third Monday of the month at 8pm via Zoom. Contact Don Hafer with any questions at 269/985-3637.

STOCK DONATIONS

Saron partners with a brokerage firm to accept stock donations. If you would like to donate stock, email Ed Brunner at ebrunner54@gmail.com to receive more information. Thanks!

Facilities

HELPING HANDS

We do all sorts of things from building maintenance to preps for worship in the sanctuary to assembling bulletins and newsletters and so much more. We meet on Wednesdays around 9am and know you are invited – whatever your age, gender, or ability. There is a job for you to use your helping hands!

Miscellaneous Bits of News

Musical Transitions

Irma Gorman and Beth Gray-Roll will be sharing the role of organist/pianist this summer as Irma transitions into retirement. At this time, Irma's last Sunday is planned for August 10. We will let you know when it's time to celebrate Irma and commemorate the official Passing of the Pedals! In the meantime, it's business as usual.

FIRST Communion

Are you or a family member(s) interested in taking first communion? We are putting together a group for **August 10, during the 150th Anniversary Worship**. If you are interested, please contact Pr. James so we can schedule a time for pre-first communion education!

BOYS & GIRLS CLUB

For the last several years, Saron has been sending a group to support the Boys & Girls Club annual **Unity Day**, an event that celebrates all the member kids in Berrien County.

Thursday, July 24
Benton Harbor Campus
12pm - 6pm
(Exact time slots determined by job placement)

Sign up by using the link in the weekly email or on the clipboard in the narthex.

We will have our annual Lion's Park Beach Picnic & Worship on **Wednesday, July 9 at 6pm**! Saron will provide the meat with buns, condiments, water, paper products & utensils. Use the link in the weekly email to indicate if you can bring a side or dessert to share. One dish per family is plenty. **Please join us even if you aren't able to bring food. All are welcome!**

SOUTH BEND CUBS

June 20

So much fun was had on this perfect night at Four Winds Field. Go Cubs!

WATER STREET GLASSWORKS

Tuesday, July 15 at 1pm

Commemorate Saron's 150th Anniversary with a fused glass suncatcher or ornament! **You can make one during the class at Water Street Glassworks in Benton Harbor or you can buy one of the extra we make that day.** Quantity will be limited. The cost is **$15** either way. Use the clipboard in the narthex or call the office to attend the class. Act fast as it's almost full!

Saron Lutheran Church

1875 | 150th Anniversary | 2025

Generations of Serving & Sharing God's Love

Make new memories while we commemorate our past!

July 13: Group Photo

Lead: Scott Gaspari

Saron
1875 | 150th Anniversary | 2025
Generations of Serving & Sharing God's Love
You are invited to join us in celebrating this impressive milestone in Saron's great history through worship, music, food & fellowship.
Sunday, August 10, 2025
10am Worship at Saron Lutheran Church
11:30am Meal at Union & Social
216 Court Street in St Joseph
Hors d'Oeuvres will be served followed by a buffet of maple bourbon pecan chicken breast, sous vide sirloin short ribs, truffle parmesan fried potatoes and green beans almondine. Finish with coffee and desserts.
Cost of meal is $30 per adult, $15 per child (4-12) and under 4 are free. Reserve tickets by July 11 via the weekly email or contact the church office.

Cost is ***not*** intended to be a barrier to attendance. If you would like to come and need assistance, contact Pastor James or Amanda. **We've had a member offer to cover the ticket price of anyone for whom the cost would be a challenge.**

New Church Photo Directory

Lead: Kathie Bradley

If you couldn't make any of the professional photo days, we will be in touch to take your photo after a service or at your home.

History Research, Documenting & Presenting

Lead: Kate Ulrey

There are new posters with historical information appearing in the narthex throughout the year. We will also be putting as much of Saron's history as we can fit in the new directory.

Lead: Marilyn Lucy

The cement is being poured for the the prayer nook, which is a semi-enclosed bench that will block out some of the road noise and provide a peaceful place to sit for prayer, reflection or have a sandwich. Once ready, Dale Lucy is planning to build a kit of sorts that we will then have a service day to assemble on-site. We will also be putting in some additional low-maintenance plantings to connect this new area to the existing courtyard beds. The plan also includes installing an outdoor prayer station. This fall, we'd like to relocate the Japanese maple to a new spot in the ground (the current above ground planter is rotting). A picnic table and secured trash reciptical are on the wish list, along with signage to encourage the community to enjoy the space and reinforce our welcome to all.

The extent of our work on the Community Prayer & Meditation Garden is directly tied to the funds we collect. If you would like to contribute, make sure your donation is marked "Prayer Garden."

SARON LUTHERAN CHURCH
510 MAIN STREET
ST. JOSEPH, MI 49085

Website: saronlutheran.org
Email: info@saronlutheran.org

A Congregation of:
The North/West Lower Michigan Synod
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

JULY 2025 NEWSLETTER

Saron Lutheran Church

Grace Notes: God is with you through the highs and lows!

Sunday, July 27 - Wednesday, July 30

6pm - 7:30pm

Request VBS registration link:

info@saronlutheran.org

This unique Vacation Bible School opportunity, open to all kids preschool-5th grade, will have fun activities, crafts, lessons, story-times, snacks, and of course MUSIC!

Bring your kids, grandkids, friends and neighbors!

Walk-ins are always warmly welcome but for planning purposes, we like to know who is coming to ensure we have enough supplies and a t-shirt in their size.

Use the registration link in the weekly email or contact the church office.

JULY 2025

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
		1 6pm Bible Study	**2** 9am Helping Hands 9:30am Bible Study	**3**	**4** **Happy 4th of July!**	**5**
6 10m Worship with Zoom Option	**7** Noon Prayer Group	**8** 6pm Bible Study	**9** 9am Helping Hands 9:30am Bible Study **6pm Lions Park Beach Picnic & Worship**	**10**	**11**	**12**
13 10m Worship with Zoom Option **GROUP PICTURES!**	**14** Noon Prayer Group	**15** 6pm Bible Study 8pm Support Meeting	**16** 9am Helping Hands 9:30am Bible Study 6pm Saron Church Women Dinner at Papa Vino's	**17**	**18**	**19**
20 10m Worship with Zoom Option	**21** Noon Prayer Group 7pm Council Meeting	**22** 6pm Bible Study	**23** 9am Helping Hands 9:30am Bible Study	**24** **SOUP KITCHEN**	**25**	**26**
27 10m Worship with Zoom Option	**28** Noon Prayer Group	**29** 6pm Bible Study	**30** 9am Helping Hands 9:30am Bible Study	**31**		